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WILLIAM CARTER, THE BENSONTOWN HOMER

BY PHILLIPS BARRY, A.M.

IN the "Harris Collection of American Poetry," at Brown University, is a small volume of verse by a forgotten country minstrel, printed in crude fashion on a poor quality of paper, now brittle and brown with age. It was published at Akron, O., in the year 1848, as appears from the titlepage.¹

"William Lorenzo Carter, the Author," to quote from the preface to the little book, "was born at Benson, Rutland County, Vermont, November 14, 1813, and was *blind from his birth*, or so nearly so that he could not distinguish objects, and could only see that there was light,² without receiving any benefit from that knowledge. His father³ was a Baptist Clergyman, of good and respectable standing at Benson,⁴ although he was not permanently located at that place. He resided mostly at Benson until William was sixteen years of age, when the Author lost his mother; and soon after this event, his father became a Mormon, and in 1833, removed to Kirtland in this State.⁵ He there commenced the study of English Grammar, learning it from lectures and from having it read to him. He made very good proficiency in this study while he continued it. But in 1834, his father went to the Mormon Settlement in Missouri, where he died, leaving the Author without any means of prosecuting his study, and in fact, leaving him without a home or any means of support, never having learned any trade (which, of course, he could only learn by the sense of feeling). In 1836, he returned to the East, with the intention of having his eyes operated upon, in the hope that he might thereby be enabled, partially, to

¹ *Miscellaneous Poems on Various Subjects*. Composed by Wm. L. Carter, who has been blind from his birth. Printed by H. Canfield, Akron, 1848.

² W. A. S., Lancaster, Pa., whose maternal grandmother was own aunt to William Carter, states, however, "There must have been one small perfect spot in the retina of the right eye,—this he made use of by means of a sort of ray filter, composed of glass arranged in layers, and enclosed in a leather tube,—by means of this he was able to read."

³ Rev. John Carter. Recent information from Benson is to the effect that he is still remembered by old people now living in that town.

⁴ W. A. S. states definitely that Rev. John Carter was a "minister in the Baptist Church at Benson."

⁵ "Kirtland, O., was the seat of the first Mormon colony. There was built the first Mormon temple. The name of John S. Carter, evidently our Benson minister, appears in the list of high priests chosen Feb. 17, 1834, to constitute the first high council of the Mormon Church" (J. H. EVANS, *One Hundred Years of Mormonism*, p. 195). The identity is settled by the following anecdote in the Journal of H. C. Kimball: In 1834, "when the cholera first broke out in the camp, John S. Carter was the first who went forward to rebuke it, but himself was immediately slain" (I. W. RILEY, *The Founder of Mormonism*, p. 285). The camp referred to was the refuge-camp on the banks of the Missouri River, whither the Mormons went after the breaking-up of their colony in Missouri.

receive his sight, if not wholly; but in this he did not succeed. He then endeavored to find some opportunity to learn a trade, but the same evil genius that seemed to preside over his destiny baffled his efforts in this respect. He next made application for admittance into the Institution for the Blind in Boston, but through some defect in the mode of application, he was rejected. Thus failing entirely in the object of his journey, he returned to Ohio, and in 1840, entered the Institution for the Blind at Columbus, and remained in that excellent Institution about a year and a half, during which time he learned to read and write, and also continued the study of English Grammar, which he had before begun; he also made some proficiency in composition while at this Institution. From thence, he went to Illinois, where he remained a short time, and then¹ returned to this State, where he has resided ever since."

Thus far the preface to the volume concerning Carter. Very little more is known of his subsequent life. From another source it is known that "in the year 1860, he left his home, near Kirtland, Ohio, to walk to Salt Lake City, Utah, he being a great walker, often undertaking journeys of a hundred miles. He reached the State of Illinois, but nothing has ever been heard from him since. No clew to his whereabouts has ever been discovered."² Evidently our poet was a zealous Mormon, and it is not unlikely that he was among the number of the pilgrims who fell by the wayside ere they reached the promised land.

"He commenced composing verses and singing them, when at the age of twelve, for his own amusement, and to while away the dull and tedious hours which hung heavily on his mind. He would also compose epigrams of a satirical character to gratify the piques that he had against some of his mates. None of these earlier poems, however, were ever reduced to writing, but were composed and recited from memory."³ The entire published product of his muse consists of six poems, five of them original, upon mournful subjects, the sixth a Scripture paraphrase.⁴ These "were composed at various times, some before, and some after he removed to Ohio, — he would compose them and retain them in his memory, until he could get some friend to write them off for him."⁵ A few stanzas from one of the best of them are worth reproducing here.

¹ Doubtless he went to Nauvoo, the Mormon city founded by Joseph Smith in 1840, his return to Kirtland being perhaps due to the Nauvoo riots of 1844.

² W. A. S., Lancaster, Pa.

³ From the preface to the volume of poems.

⁴ Contents of the volume of Carter's poems: The Orphan's Dream; Lines on the Death of a Mother; Lines composed on parting with a Sister; Lines composed on a Mother's Last Words to her Son; Lines addressed to my Sisters, on taking Leave of them in 1843; Paraphrase on the First Chapter of Genesis.

⁵ From the preface to the volume of poems.

'T is true, thy happiest youthful days
 Are gone and cannot be recalled,—
 Many a friend beloved by thee
 No more on earth thou may'st behold.

But heaven can make the desert smile,
 The withered bud to bloom a rose,
 Sweet rills of pleasure to abound,
 Where the dark stream of trouble flows.

Short is affliction's night at best,
 And soon the glorious day will dawn,
 With joy immortal to the poor,
 And bid their sorrows all be gone.

When Michael stays the wheel of time
 And calls the holy martyrs forth,
 With all the ransomed of the Lord,
 From east to west, from south to north,

Where streams of joy forever roll,
 Beyond all trouble, death and pain,
 Thy happy parents thou shalt hail,
 Receive their loving smiles again.¹

A perusal of Carter's published compositions would lead no one to affirm that upon their intrinsic merit as poems depends his place among American bards. It is as the Bensontown Homer that he is significant for us. This title befits him as the author of the now celebrated American traditional ballad, "Fair Charlotte."² This ballad is now current in the States from Maine westward to Dakota, thence southward to Oklahoma;³ it has, moreover, lately been recorded in Nova Scotia. It is a highly significant fact that no trace of it has appeared in the rich "ballad country" of the Southeastern States. "There is no question as to William Carter being the author and composer of this song,"⁴ the motive for which, according to the statement of the poet's cousin, being "the happening of the events described, in his old Vermont town of Benson, or Bensontown."⁵ It appears to have

¹ W. L. Carter, *The Orphan's Dream*, stanzas 80–84.

² See my article, "Native American Balladry," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xxii, pp. 365–373.

³ In my collection *Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States* are nineteen versions, distributed as follows: Maine, three; Vermont, one; Massachusetts, two; Pennsylvania, four; Ohio, two; Wisconsin, two; Kansas and Dakota, one each; also one from Nova Scotia. The Kansas version is traced to Ohio; both Ohio versions, to Vermont. Professor Henry M. Belden, Columbia, Mo., has collected a dozen versions, most of them in the State of Missouri. The Oklahoma version is in *Cowboy Songs* (edited by John A. Lomax), p. 239.

⁴ W. A. S., Lancaster, Pa., in a communication dated March 29, 1910.

⁵ W. A. S., Lancaster, Pa., so testifies on the authority of his mother, who is own cousin to William Carter himself.

passed into oral circulation probably as early as the year 1835,¹ so that its life as a traditional ballad covers little more than three-quarters of a century.

To-day the ballad is current under the same conditions of transmission that govern all folk-song, as the acquired property² of the singing folk. It is quite as communal as the best of the ancient British ballads. That it has become so widespread in its distribution, is due largely to the wanderings of the nomadic Carter himself, a modern representative of the old-time wandering minstrel. We might also speak of it as a brief unwritten chapter in the history of the indirect influence of the Mormon movement. Important "foci of infection," as it were, for the ballad, are in Vermont, central Pennsylvania, northeastern Ohio, and Missouri,—places in which it is known that Carter or some member of his family has tarried.³ It is of course, at this late day, quite beyond our expectation to be able to recover with any degree of certainty, or even probability, the *ipsissima verba* of Carter's own composition. There is no record whatever to show that it was ever printed; perhaps it was never even written down from the author's dictation. We may not be far wrong, however, in assuming that a version presently to be put in evidence, said to be derived from a native of Vermont "who knew that the story was as it is related, taking place on New Year's Eve, and . . . either knew the people spoken of, or those who knew them," is fairly close to Carter's original.⁴

FAIR CHARLOTTE

(Traditional text of a ballad composed by William Lorenzo Carter)

1. Fair Charlotte lived on a mountain side,
In a wild and lonely spot,
No dwelling was for three miles round,
Except her father's cot.
2. On many a cold and wintry night,
Young swains were gathered there,
For her father kept a social board,
And she was very fair.

¹ The ballad, of course, was composed before Carter left Vermont, in 1833, to join the Mormon colony in Kirtland, O. A Kansas version, kindly communicated to me by Professor A. H. Tolman, Chicago, Ill., is one of a number of ballads taken down from D. S., Winfield, Kan., whose father, R. H. B., lived in Ohio, and from whom D. S. learned at least one ballad in 1835.

² That is, folk-song is folk-song solely by reason of its traditional currency among the singing folk. Any definition by origin is beside the point. See my article, "Irish Folk-Song," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xxiv, pp. 332-343.

³ Vermont, of course, is important as the poet's own home; in Lancaster, Pa., his cousin lives; northeastern Ohio knew Carter as a member of the Mormon colony at Kirtland; and it is not unlikely that he accompanied his father to Missouri in 1834.

⁴ "Fair Charlotte," K. *Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States*, from L. P. S., Warren, O., as derived from M. E. L., Warren, O., whose grandfather was the Vermonter to whom reference is made. L. P. S., whose great-great-grandfather founded the village of Fairhaven, near Benson, Vt., also knows the ballad.

3. Her father loved to see her dress
Fine as a city belle,—
She was the only child he had,
And he loved his daughter well,
4. On New Year's eve, when the sun was set,
She gazed with a wistful eye,
Out of the frosty window forth,
To see the sleighs go by.¹
5. She restless was, and longing looked,
Till a well known voice she heard,
Came dashing up to her father's door,
Young Charley's sleigh appeared.
6. Her mother said, — “ My daughter dear,
This blanket round you fold,
For 't is an awful night without,
And you'll be very cold.”
7. “ Oh nay, oh nay,” young Charlotte cried,
And she laughed like a Gypsy queen,
“ To ride in blanket muffled up,
I never will be seen.”
8. “ My woolen cloak is quite enough,
You know it is lined throughout,
Besides I have my silken shawl,
To tie my neck about.”
9. Her gloves and bonnet being on,
She jumped into the sleigh,
And off they went, down the mountain side,
And over the hills away.²
10. With muffled faces, silently,
Five long, cold miles were passed,
When Charles, in few and broken words,
The silence broke at last.

¹ N. A. S., version I, from J. M. L., Mahanoy City, Pa., has after this, —

4a. At the village inn, fifteen miles off,
There's a merry ball to-night,
The air is piercing cold as death,
But her heart is warm and light.

It appears also in other versions.

² N. A. S., I, has after this, —

9a. There's music in the sound of bells,
As o'er the hills they go,
What creaking do the runners make,
As they leave the frozen snow.

Two versions only have both stanzas.

11. "Oh! such a night I never saw,
My lines I scarce can hold,"—
Fair Charlotte said, in a feeble voice,
"I am exceeding cold."
12. He cracked his whip and they onward sped,
Much faster than before,
Until five other dreary miles,
In silence they passed o'er.
13. "How fast," says Charles, "the frozen ice
Is gathering on my brow,"
Said Charlotte, in a weaker voice,
"I'm growing warmer now."
14. Thus on they went through the frosty air,
And in the cold starlight,
Until the village and bright ball-room,
They did appear in sight.
15. Charles drove to the door, and jumping out,
He held his hand to her,—
"Why sit you there like a monument,
That has no power to stir?"
16. He asked her once, he asked her twice,
She answered never a word:
He asked her for her hand again,
But still she never stirred.
17. He took her hand into his own,
Oh God! it was cold as stone!
He tore the mantle from her brow,
On her face the cold stars shone.
18. Then quickly to the lighted hall,
Her lifeless form he bore,
Fair Charlotte was a frozen corpse,
And her lips spake never more.
19. He threw himself down by her side,
And the bitter tears did flow,
And he said, "My own, my youthful bride,
I never more shall know!"
20. He twined his arms around her neck,
He kissed her marble brow,
And his thoughts went back to where she said,
"I am growing warmer now."¹
21. He bore her body to the sleigh,
And with it he drove home:
And when he reached her father's door,
Oh! how her parents mourned!

¹ Many versions of the ballad end here.

22. They mourned the loss of a daughter dear,
 And Charles mourned o'er her doom,
 Until at last his heart did break,
 And they both lie in one tomb.¹

This text is a representative of what may fairly be called the Vulgate text of "Fair Charlotte." Of the thirty versions of the ballad known to me, — a number of which, however, are incomplete, — all but four conform very closely to it. Of these four, one was taken down in Hathorne, Mass.; another in Kansas City, Mo.;² a third comes from South Dakota;³ the fourth from Rome, Pa.⁴ By reason of the passing uniqueness of certain stanzas,⁵ the Kansas City version, the full text of which is herewith printed, is extremely interesting.

THE FROZEN GIRL⁶

Verse 1.

Young Charlotte lived by the mountain side
 In a wild and lonely spot
 No dwellings there for three miles round
 Except her father's cot.⁷

2nd

At evening when their work was o'er,
Young swain would gather there
 For her father kept a social board
 And she was very fair *Rep.*

3rd

At the close of a cold and stormy day
 With beaming anxious eye
 Young Charlotte by the window stood
 To see the sleighs go by.

¹ Five versions only have these concluding stanzas.

² From J. G. H., Kansas City, Mo., as sung in eastern New York about forty years ago; 1907. MS. in possession of Professor Henry M. Belden, Columbia, Mo.

³ From M. E. H., a student at the University of Wisconsin, — a version for which I am indebted to the kindness of Professor A. Beatty. In it is the following noteworthy stanza:

He took her lily-white hand in his,
 O God! 't was stiff and cold.
 He took her bonnet from her head,
 As down the death-sweat rolled.

⁴ See my article "Native Balladry in America," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xxii, pp. 365-373.

⁵ Indicated by being printed in Italics.

⁶ MS. of J. G. H., Kansas City, Mo., kindly communicated to me for this article by Professor Belden. (Copied *verbatim et literatim*.)

⁷ Note of J. G. H. "In singing, the two last lines of each verse are repeated."

4

*The snow had fallen all day long
The wind to northward veered—
And dashing up to the cottage door,
Young Charlie's sleigh appeared.*

(5)

*Charles drove a pair of Morgan blacks,
That were his special pride,
His cutter had just space enough
For Lottie at his side.*

(6)

"At a village inn fifteen miles off
There's a merry ball to-night"
The air is freezing cold as death
But her heart is warm and *light*

(7)

*Her father just then coming in¹
It took not long to gain
Consent from him and his good wife
For Charles, their favorite swain.*

(8)

Her mother said, "My daughter dear
This blanket round you fold"
For it is a dreadful night abroad
You'll take your death of cold

(9)

Oh no! Oh no! Young Charlotte cried
For she felt like a Gypsy Queen
To ride in blankets muffled up
I never can be seen.

(10)

*Five miles along the mountain roads
Charles drove his blacks with pride
He was as proud as any king
With Lottie at his side*

(11)

Said Charles such a night I never saw
The reins I scarce can hold
When Charlotte said in a feeble voice
I am exceeding cold

¹ E. A. H., from whom the South Dakota version was obtained, adds that there was also a stanza beginning

Her father he was a dark, stern man.

(12)

He cracked his whip urged on his team
 Much faster than before
 Until at length five weary miles
 In silence they passed o'er.

(13)

*He swung his arms, chirped to his team
 Dashed frost from beard & brow
 When Charlotte said in a voice quite low
 I'm growing warmer now.*

An interesting point remains to be considered; namely, the significance of "Fair Charlotte" for our conception of the ballad as a species of folk-song. Defined in its simplest possible terms, a ballad is the record of action cast in poetical form; a folk-ballad, consisting of text and melody,¹ is a ballad traditionally current among the singing folk. Under this definition there is no question of the right of Carter's "Fair Charlotte," Saunders's "Casey Jones,"² and other items of American balladry, to be reckoned among folk-ballads. Yet into this apparently very simple situation enter at once certain complications. Though it is hardly germane to a general treatment of the subject of folk-balladry to deal with texts apart from melodies,³ we have still the right to analyze ballads as literature. The result of such analysis has been the discovery that not all folk-ballads are alike. Two distinct species are now recognized,⁴ set off from each other by a marked divergence of literary convention. That is, we have, in the first place, the "popular" ballad,⁵ notable for its dramatic impressiveness, its free use of abrupt dialogue and change in situation, not to speak of

¹ All folk-ballads are sung, and always have been. Recited ballads are the product of accident. A folk-singer may be unwilling to sing because of age or infirmity, or before strangers.

² "Casey Jones" (*Railroad Man's Magazine*, May, 1908, November, 1910, December, 1911, April, 1912) was composed and sung by Wallace Saunders, a negro laborer. Its subject is the last run of John Luther Jones, nicknamed "Casey Jones," an engineer on the Chicago & New Orleans Limited, who, on March 18, 1900, lost his life in a rear-end collision with a freight-train at Vaughans, Miss. It is current in many parts of the States, and has lately been recorded in the Canal zone.

³ Mention may here be made of the melodies to "Fair Charlotte." Eight are known. Of these, six are sets of the original air to which Carter himself sang the ballad, another remote set of which is the hymn-tune "Golden Hill." Five of the sets are closely related; the sixth, belonging to the unique Kansas City version of J. G. H., being more distant. The seventh and eighth, from Maine and Nova Scotia respectively, are sets of an Irish air,—the same as that from which is derived the melody to the students' song, "Michael Roy."

⁴ H. M. Belden, "The Relation of Balladry to Folk-Lore," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xxiv, pp. 1-13. "The ballad . . . has two main types. . . . Both . . . are popular in character and in vogue."

⁵ For instance, "Earl Brand," or "Lord Randall."

its characteristic iterative style.¹ This species is not by any means extinct, and may well outlast its later-born relative, the "vulgar" ballad, so called.² Conventional narration, in all its dead-level dulness, is the touchstone of the genuine in vulgar balladry, as turned out by the ton from the presses of Pitts, Such, and Jemmy Catnatch. Furthermore, however much we may call into question the significance of this difference, or doubt that it bears witness to any actual difference in origin; however much we may deny the right of the critic to establish upon its basis a ballad aristocracy,³ — we cannot deny that the difference exists.

Now as to "Fair Charlotte" itself. A perusal of the text, as given in a preceding paragraph of this article, would leave us little hesitation as to where to place the ballad. We should, perforce, include it in the second category, as the American representative of the British "vulgar" species. As a matter of fact, however, the folk is not content to let it stay there. Evidence is at hand to show that, under the influence of seventy-five years of communal re-creation,⁴ Carter's ballad has developed something more than impersonality of authorship, and multiplicity of version, both as to text and melody. It has earned the right, provided there be a ballad aristocracy, with its noble blood determined by a critical test, to enrol itself in the number of the nobility; that is, it has begun, at least, to acquire an iterative style, not only in the melody,⁵ but, what is more important for us here, in the text as well.⁶

Herewith may be cited in full the acquired characteristics of the versions in question.⁷

¹ That is, the effective repetition of suggestive phrases, verses, or stanzas. The iterative style may be parallel, as in Hebrew poetry; or climactic, as in the ancient ballad. Even Nietzsche recognized its effectiveness (see especially *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, The Yea and Amen Lay).

² This unfortunate name it seems impossible to better: it carries with it no connotation of vulgarity in the language or subject-matter.

³ That is, to regard the three hundred and six "popular" ballads as having an exclusive right to the name "ballad."

⁴ By "communal re-creation" is meant the process of passing through the minds of a large number of folk-singers, good, bad, and indifferent, which issues in certain well-known effects upon the text and melody of all folk-songs.

⁵ Ballad melodies (this applies quite as much to the melodies of vulgar as of popular ballads) possess an important, if long unrecognized, characteristic feature, — the climactic iteration of partial melodies (see my article "Folk-Music in America," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xxii, pp. 72-81).

⁶ This is not unprecedented, as will later appear.

⁷ For convenience, the references to re-created stanzas are taken in the order in which the corresponding stanzas occur in the archetype.

Stanzas 4, 5 (Columbia, Mo.¹)

'T was New Year's eve, and the sun was low,
High beams her lingering eye,
As she to the frozen window went,
 To watch the sleighs go by.

High beams her lingering eye,
 When a well-known voice she heard,
As she to the frozen window went,
 Young Charles in his sleigh appeared.

An effective iterative style is produced by subconscious assimilation of language.²

Stanza 4a (Hathorne, Mass.³)

"In yonder village, miles away,
 There's a merry ball to-night,
 Although it is extremely cold,
 Our hearts are warm and light."

Here is a direct change from a descriptive passage to unintroduced dialogue.

Stanzas 9a-11 (Cameron, Mo.⁴)

"There is music in the sound of bells,
 As o'er the hills we go,
 What a creaking noise those runners make,
 As they glide o'er the frozen snow.

"Such a night as this I never seen,
 The reins I scarce can hold."

In this case, a passage of continuous abrupt dialogue is produced by the loss of stanza 10, introductory to dialogue, and the change of 9a from description to dialogue. In no other version has the change been so marked, though in four others the dropping-out of stanza 10 has left the dialogue in stanza 11 unintroduced.⁵

Stanza 10 (Rome, Pa.⁶)

Along the bleak and dreary way,
 How keen the winds do blow!
 The stars did never shine so bright,
 How creaks the frozen snow!

¹ Recollected by J. F., kindly communicated to me by Professor Belden.

² By an exactly analogous process, folk-music develops an iterative style (see my article "The Origin of Folk-Melodies," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xxiii, pp. 440-445).

³ "Fair Charlotte," E, *Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States*.

⁴ From W. L. H., for which I am indebted to Professor Belden.

⁵ In one Missouri version, that of J. F. (see note 1), iteration occurs,

"Such a night, such a night, I never saw!"

⁶ "Fair Charlotte," D, *Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States*. For the full text see my article "Native Balladry in America," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xxii, pp. 365-373.

*Along the bleak and dreary way,
Five lonely miles they passed,
When Charles in a few and frozen words
The silence broke at last.*

This iterative passage is one of the several peculiarities of this version.

Stanza 14 (West Plains, Mo.¹)

*This on the way through the frost and snow
While the wintry stars shone bright,
"Oh, now we are to the village inn,
And the ball-room is in sight."*

This version is unique in the bold change from description to un-introduced dialogue.

Stanzas 15-16 (South Dakota²)

*"Why sit you there like a monument
That has no power to stir?
He asked her once, he asked her twice,
But received no answer from her,
He asked her once, he asked her twice,
But she answered not a word.
He asked her for her hand again,³
And still she never stirred.*

The iteration is acquired by the simple act of subconscious repetition of the phrase containing the thought most impressive to the hearer.

Stanza 18 (Hathorne, Mass.⁴)

*A lifeless corpse young Charlotte was,
For she froze by the mountain side,
A lifeless corpse young Charles he bore,
Into the inn's fireside.*

The admirable effectiveness of the iteration in this passage is quite in keeping with the style of the ancient ballad.

It might be objected that these examples are few; yet they are all that, under the circumstances, we have any right to expect, if not more. Communal re-creation is not a rapid process, nor a uniform one. Carter's ballad has been subject to it for less than a century, whereas the ancient ballads may well have been in oral circulation for a period of several centuries. Furthermore, whereas their history has

¹ From MS. of M. D., West Plains, Mo., kindly communicated to me by Professor Belden.

² From M. E. H., kindly contributed to me by Professor Beatty.

³ In N. A. S., version E, this line appears as introduced dialogue.—

"Give me your hand!" he said again.

⁴ "Fair Charlotte," E, *Folk-Songs of the North Atlantic States*.

been laid in the golden age of folk-song, it has been the fate of the American ballad to struggle into life during a period of decadence, when the fashion of folk-singing was on the decrease. And it being admitted, as it must be, that the iterative style is a very old form of expression, we should expect exactly what we find to be the case; namely, that reverions to this primitive form — literary atavisms, as we may call them, traceable to the subconscious action of communal re-creation — should be numerous in the ancient British ballad, and sporadic in the late-born child of the American folk-muse.

Still another objection must be met and answered. In the vulgar ballad of Britain, a type much older than our native ballad, only the faintest traces of the "ballad style," as far as the text is concerned, grow out of communal re-creation.¹ Yet the very fact that the iterative style, while generally present in the melodies,² is absent in the texts, should lead us to suspect the presence of some factor inhibitive of communal re-creation with respect to the text only. This factor is the busy press of Jemmy Catnatch and his kind, who practically never printed melodies. The cheapness and ready accessibility of the broadsides tended to produce and preserve a "vulgate text," while the singers were left free to vary the melody according as the subconscious fancy led them: hence the absence, except in sporadic cases, of the iterative style from the text of the vulgar ballad in oral tradition. The ancient ballads, on the contrary, were many of them never printed. Such as were printed and circulated in broadside form had been in oral circulation so long that their characteristic style was fixed. It has been the good fortune of Carter's ballad that, like "Lord Randall" and some others, it never fell into the maw of the broadside press.

In the last analysis, it seems that much of our "ballad problem" has been one of our own making. We can now be sure that folk-song and folk-ballad can be accounted for on the basis of individual invention, with subsequent communal re-creation; moreover, that the characteristic reversion to the primitive iterative style, with its dramatic impressiveness, develops in ballads quite spontaneously, as an effect of continual folk-singing. In "Fair Charlotte" we have laid before us a history, in miniature, of folk-song and folk-ballad the world over. So much do we owe to the humble genius of William Lorenzo Carter, the village Homer of old Bensontown.

FELTON HALL,
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¹ It does, however, appear to some extent in versions re-created by the folk-singers of the Southeastern States, etc.

² See my article "Folk-Music in America," *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. xxii, pp. 72-81.